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S E C R E T SANAA 002225

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON SA'DA FIGHTING

REF: SANAA 2006 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Thomas C. Krajeski; reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

1. (C) Despite repeated government claims that the fighting in Sa'da is in its final stages, the last week has been increasingly bloody for both sides. The ROYG has stopped discussing casualty rates publicly, but local media reports that 15 soldiers were killed on August 24 including Lt. Col. al-Hitar, brother of Supreme Court Judge al-Hitar who heads the Government Dialogue Committee.

2. (S/NF) Al Jazeera reported August 25 that dozens of government forces were killed in clashes with al-Houthi two days earlier. Reuters reported 11 dead. In fact, 135 were killed when a group of soldiers dressed in civilian clothing attempted to infiltrate a suspected al-Houthi hideout and fell victim to a Yemeni Air Force strike. (Note: Coordination between the Army, Air Force and Central Security Forces has been poor throughout this conflict. Post has suspected prior incidents of friendly fire. However, this is the first case we can confirm. End Note.)

3. (S) Al Jazeera also reported that the bodies of 120 al-Houthi supporters were found in a hideout after it fell under government control. 120 dead rebels in one operation is quite plausible given Post's estimate that 1,500 al-Houthi supporters and approximately 2,500 government forces have died since the fighting began over seventy days ago -- official numbers remain at one-tenth of this.
KRAJESKI